DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 928 CG 014 575

AUTHOR Adams, Carol H.: Sherer, Mark
TITLE Is Androgyny Really Better?
PUB DATE Mar 80
NOTE 20p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association (26th, Washington, DC, March 26-29, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adjustment (to Environment): Age Differences: *Androgyny: College Students: Comparative Analysis: *Females: Homemakers: *Psychopathology: *Sex Role
IDENTIFIERS *Bem Sex Role Inventory: *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory

ABSTRACT

Some research has found that masculinity is associated with equally good, if not better, adjustment than androgyny. The relationship between gender-role orientation and psychological adjustment was examined using female college students and upper-middle-class housewives to test the hypothesis that masculine and androgynous women from both samples would exhibit less psychopathology on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) than feminine and undifferentiated groups. Subjects completed the MMPI and the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). The hypothesis was partially supported for college students but not for the housewives. Significant differences between the masculine and androgynous groups and the feminine group did not emerge as predicted, with the exception that the masculine group was significantly less introverted than the feminine group. (Author/HLM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED190928

Is Androgyny Really Better?

Carol H. Adams and Mark Sherer

University of Alabama

Running head: Is Androgyny Really Better?

CG 014575

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Carol H. Adams

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Is Androgyny Really Better?

Androgynous persons--those who can exhibit either masculine or feminine traits as the occasion demands--are considered by Bem (1974) to be better adjusted psychologically than persons who are traditionally masculine or feminine. Accordingly, she (Bem, 1975; Bem & Lenney, 1976; Bem, Martyna, & Watson, 1976) found that androgynous college students, as determined by the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), displayed gender-role adaptability in a variety of interpersonal situations whereas masculine men and feminine women were stymied when confronted with gender-inappropriate situations. Androgynous persons also have been shown to have higher self-esteem (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975), greater social ascendancy (Berzins, Note 1), and greater maturity in moral reasoning (Block, 1973) than gender-role stereotyped or undifferentiated subjects (i.e., those with low levels of both masculine and feminine traits).

While it is compelling to believe that persons who are flexible with respect to gender roles should be "better off" in any number of ways, there is some suggestion that masculinity is associated with equally good, if not better, adjustment than androgyny. In two other investigations of self-esteem and gender-role orientation, androgynous subjects did not differ significantly from masculine subjects. Both

groups had higher self-esteem than feminine and undifferentiated persons, who did not differ from one another (Bem, 1977; Wetter, Note 2). Using a variety of personality and adjustment measures, Jones, Chernovetz, and Hansson (1978) found that masculinity rather than androgyny was generally related to flexibility and adjustment in both male and female college students.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between gender-role orientation and psychological adjustment in two samples of subjects: female college students and a group of upper-middle-class housewives. The latter group was included because virtually all of the work with gender-role orientation has been done with college students; its applicability to older populations is merely inferred. The BSRI was chosen to measure gender-role orientation, and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was selected to measure adjustment. It was hypothesized that masculine and androgynous women from both samples would exhibit less psychopathology on the MMPI than the feminine and undifferentiated groups.

Method

Subjects

The college sample consisted of 45 undergraduate women from an introductory psychology course at the University of Alabama who received extra course credit for participating

in the study. Mean age of the college group was 18.4 years. The second sample was a group of 39 upper-middle-class housewives from a Southeastern suburban community who were friends of the first author's mother and participated in the study at her request. Mean age of the housewife group was 59.0 years. Data for the housewife sample were collected in the spring of 1979, and those for the college sample were gathered in the fall of 1979.

Procedure

The BSRI and the MMPI were administered individually or in small groups. The Spence et al. (1975) median split procedure was applied to the pooled BSRI scores to produce four gender-role groups: androgynous, masculine, feminine, and undifferentiated. Median masculinity and femininity scores for the pooled samples were 4.74 and 5.26, respectively.

Discriminant analyses followed, where appropriate, by univariate *F* tests and a series of planned comparisons, were used to compare MMPI profiles of these four gender-role groups. The three validity scales and the ten clinical scales of the MMPI served as dependent variables.

Results

Analyses for the combined sample will be reported first, followed by separate analyses for the student and housewife samples.

Combined Sample

Androgynous, masculine, feminine, and undifferentiated women from the combined sample were compared on the following 13 MMPI scales: L, F, K, Hs, D, Hy, Pd, Mf, Pa, Pt, Sc, Ma, and Si. They were found to differ significantly on these scales taken as a whole, Wilks lambda = .366, F (39, 202) = 2.096, $p < .007$. One significant root was extracted, which accounted for 65.38% of the variance, $\chi^2(15) = 45.306$, $p < .0002$. Univariate F tests revealed significant differences between the four groups on the following scales: K, D, Pt, and Si (see Table 1). Planned comparisons among the gender-role groups on these scales generally supported the prediction that androgynous and masculine women would manifest less pathology than feminine and undifferentiated women (see Table 2).

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Moderate elevation on the K scale is considered an indication of ego strength in college-educated and higher SES groups (Graham, 1977). Both androgynous and masculine groups, while not differing significantly from one another, scored significantly higher than the feminine group on the K scale, suggesting greater ego strength in the former two groups. The masculine group also scored significantly higher than the undifferentiated group. Feminine and undifferentiated groups did not differ significantly from

one another (see Table 2).

On the D scale, which measures depression, pessimism, and lack of self-confidence (Graham, 1977), the masculine group showed significantly less depression than the feminine or the undifferentiated group. The androgynous group was significantly less depressed than the undifferentiated group. Again, the masculine and androgynous groups did not differ significantly from one another on the D scale, nor did the feminine and undifferentiated groups (see Table 2).

The Pt scale measures anxiety and tension (Graham, 1977). Results for the Pt scale paralleled those for the D scale. The masculine group showed significantly less tension and anxiety than the feminine or the undifferentiated group. The androgynous group was significantly less tense and anxious than the undifferentiated group. The masculine and androgynous groups did not differ significantly from one another, nor did the feminine and undifferentiated groups (see Table 2).

The Si scale measures social introversion, characterized by insecurity and discomfort in social situations (Graham, 1977). Masculine and androgynous women did not differ significantly on this scale, and both groups were significantly more comfortable in social situations than either the feminine or the undifferentiated groups. These latter two groups did not differ significantly from one another but both groups obtained scores indicative of social discomfort

(see Table 2).

Thus, when the combined sample of students and housewives were compared on the MMPI scales, androgynous and masculine women appeared generally to have greater ego-strength, less depression, anxiety, and tension, and to be more comfortable socially than feminine and undifferentiated women. In the next section, analyses for the student sample will be presented.

Student Sample

The discriminant analysis comparing androgynous, masculine, feminine, and undifferentiated students revealed a significant difference on the 13 MMPI scales taken as a whole, Wilks lambda = .198, F (39, 87) = 1.614, $p < .033$. One significant root accounted for 72.88% of the variance, $\chi^2(15) = 36.841$, $p < .002$. Univariate F tests indicated that the D, Pt, and Si scales significantly separated the groups. Examination of the pattern of means on these scales in Table 3, along with the results of the planned comparisons in Table 4, indicates that the undifferentiated group manifested significantly more pathology than the androgynous or the masculine group.

Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here

Undifferentiated students were found to be significantly more depressed (scale D) than the androgynous or the masculine group, as well as more tense and anxious (scale Pt),

and more socially introverted (scale Si). On the Si scale, the difference between the masculine and feminine groups also reached significance, with the masculine group showing greater social comfort.

Housewife Sample

A final discriminant analysis was performed on the data for the housewives. When the four gender-role groups of housewives were compared on the 13 MMPI scales, no significant difference was found, Wilks lambda = .202, F (39, 69) = 1.267, $p < .194$. Consequently, no further analyses were made of these data. (See Table 5 for mean MMPI scores for housewives.)

Insert Table 5 about here

Discussion

The hypothesis that androgynous and masculine women would be better adjusted psychologically than feminine or undifferentiated women was partially supported for college students but not for the housewife sample. Among students, the masculine and androgynous groups were less depressed, less anxious and tense, and less socially uncomfortable than the undifferentiated group. However, contrary to prediction, significant differences between the masculine and androgynous groups and the feminine group did not emerge, with

the exception that the masculine group was significantly less introverted than the feminine group.

The failure to find superior adjustment in the androgynous group does not lend support to Bem's theory of androgyny as an enriched and flexible behavioral repetoire. Rather, it supports Kelly and Worell's (1977) suggestion that androgyny accrues any advantages it might have by virtue of the masculine traits it embodies.

The failure to find significant differences among gender-role groups in the housewife sample is problematic in that any one of several factors could be responsible. First, there is no evidence to assure us that the BSRI, which was constructed and validated on college students, is valid for older populations.[1] Further work will be needed to assess its usefulness for such populations. Second, the housewife sample as a whole obtained less deviant scores than the college sample on the MMPI. This factor could have attenuated possible differences among the gender-role groups. And finally, it is possible that gender-role orientation is a less salient variable for women in later life than in young adulthood, when life-shaping decisions are being made.

Certainly, further comparisons among gender-role groups are in order to determine the extent of their differences and similarities. Work is presently underway to replicate the present study with similar groups of college women and to

explore the relationship between gender-role orientation and psychological adjustment in college men, for whom androgyny may have differential consequences (e.g., Jones et al., 1978; Wiggins & Holzmuller, 1978).

Reference Notes

1. Berzins, J. I. New perspectives on sex roles and personality dimensions. In R. Bednar (Chair), Sex roles: Masculine, feminine, androgynous or none of the above? Symposium presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, August 1975.

2. Wetter, R. E. Levels of self-esteem associated with four sex role categories. In R. Bednar (Chair), Sex roles: Masculine, feminine, androgynous, or none of the above? Symposium presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, August 1975.

References

Bem, S. L. The measurement of psychological androgyny. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1974, 42, 155-162.

Bem, S. L. Sex role adaptability: One consequence of psychological androgyny. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 31, 634-643.

Bem, S. L. On the utility of alternative procedures for assessing psychological androgyny. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1977, 45, 196-205.

Bem, S. L. and Lenney, E. Sex typing and the avoidance of cross-sex behavior. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1976, 33, 48-54.

Bem, S. L., Martyna, W., and Watson, C. Sex typing and androgyny: Further explorations of the expressive domain. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1976, 34, 1016-1023.

Block, J. H. Conceptions of sex role: Some cross-cultural and longitudinal perspectives. American Psychologist, 1973, 28, 512-527.

Graham, J. R. The MMPI: A practical guide. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Jones, W. H. Chernovetz, M. E. O'C., and Hansson, R. O. The enigma of androgyny: Differential implications

for males and females? Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1978, 46, 298-313.

Kelly, J. A., and Worell, J. New formulations of sex roles and androgyny: A critical review. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1977, 45, 1101-1115.

Spence, J. T., Helmreich, R., and Stapp, J. Ratings of self and peers on sex role attributes and their relation to self-esteem and conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 32, 29-39.

Wiggins, J. S., and Holzmuller, A. Psychological androgyny and interpersonal behavior. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1978, 46, 40-52.

Footnotes

This research was presented at the meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Washington, D. C., March 1980. Appreciation is extended to Raymond D. Fowler for the use of his computer program for scoring the MMPIs and to Mrs. Fleet Hardy for enlising the help of her friends who served as subjects in the housewife sample. Requests for reprints should be sent to Mark Sherer, Psychological Clinic, University of Alabama, P. O. Box 6142, University, AL 35486.

[1]Of course, the housewife sample differed from the college sample on many variables other than age. A more complete description of the housewife sample may be obtained by writing the second author.

Table 1

Mean MMPI Scores of the Four Gender-Role Groups of the Combined Sample

	Gender-Role Groups				
Scales	Androgynous (N = 22)	Masculine (N = 20)	Feminine (N = 20)	Undifferentiated (N = 22)	F
L	47.86	49.10	48.35	47.18	.335
F	55.95	52.90	57.25	56.73	1.040
K	55.64	57.15	50.70	51.86	3.329*
Hs	54.27	53.15	51.90	53.27	.217
D	52.64	47.55	56.15	58.91	4.801**
Hy	56.68	58.05	54.40	58.27	.782
Pd	60.09	59.95	54.75	62.09	1.597
Mf	46.32	50.60	50.70	47.32	1.250
Pa	55.73	54.15	56.50	58.18	.788
Pt	54.86	53.40	60.25	61.91	3.348*
Sc	57.45	56.05	57.35	62.77	1.777
Ma	63.36	61.20	56.85	57.09	1.486
Si	48.95	46.65	57.30	59.82	12.583***

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

Table 2

Planned Comparisons (*t* values) for the Four Gender-Role Groups of the Combined Sample on the K, D, Pt, and Si Scales (*df* = 80)

	Comparisons					
Scale	A-M	A-F	A-U	M-F	M-U	F-U
K	-.65	2.11*	1.65	2.69*	2.26*	-.50
D	1.62	-1.12	-2.04	-2.67*	-3.61**	-.88
Pt	.46	-1.69	-2.27*	-2.10*	-2.67*	-.52
Si	.91	-3.28**	-4.38**	-4.09**	-5.18**	-.99

Note. A = Androgynous, M = Masculine, F = Feminine, U = Undifferentiated.

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

Table 3

Mean MMPI Scores of the Four Gender-Role Groups of Students

	Gender-Role Groups				
	Androgynous	Masculine	Feminine	Undifferentiated	
Scale	(N = 14)	(N = 11)	(N = 8)	(N = 12)	F
L	45.71	45.73	43.12	44.50	.583
F	57.36	54.91	63.25	60.58	1.731
K	52.64	53.27	46.38	49.25	1.874
Hs	53.00	51.18	50.62	52.92	.198
D	51.57	46.00	54.50	62.42	5.398**
Hy	55.79	56.09	53.88	59.17	.594
Pd	60.36	64.45	60.00	66.60	.696
Mf	45.93	52.73	50.62	50.00	1.558
Pa	56.64	57.00	62.50	62.08	1.462
Pt	55.64	54.82	62.88	67.25	3.488*
Sc	59.29	59.82	63.25	67.25	1.275
Ma	66.64	70.18	64.75	60.58	1.646
Si	50.00	45.82	55.25	61.50	7.039***

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

Table 4

Planned Comparisons (*t* values) for the Four Gender-Role Groups of Students on the D, Pt, and Si Scales (*df* = 41)

	Comparisons					
Scale	A-M	A-F	A-U	M-F	M-U	F-U
D	1.38	-.67	-2.75**	-1.82	-3.92**	-1.73
Pt	.19	-1.49	-2.69**	-1.58	-2.72**	-.88
Si	1.19	-1.36	-3.36**	-2.33*	-4.31**	-1.57

Note. A = Androgynous, M = Masculine, F = Feminine, U = Undifferentiated.

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

Table 5

Mean MMPI Scores of the Four Gender-Role Groups of Housewives

	Gender-Role Groups			
	Androgynous	Masculine	Feminine	Undifferentiated
Scale	(N = 8)	(N = 9)	(N = 12)	(N = 10)
L	51.62	53.22	51.83	50.40
F	53.50	50.44	53.25	52.10
K	60.88	61.89	53.58	55.00
Hs	56.50	55.56	52.75	53.70
D	54.50	49.44	57.25	54.70
Hy	58.25	60.44	54.75	57.20
Pd	59.62	54.44	51.25	56.80
Mf	47.00	48.00	50.75	54.10
Pa	54.12	50.67	52.50	53.50
Pt	53.50	51.67	58.50	55.50
Sc	54.25	51.44	53.42	57.40
Ma	57.62	50.22	51.58	52.90
Si	47.12	47.67	58.67	57.80